MATINE APPEARED

OH FACE 14 Book World

WASHINGTON POST 27 January 1985



TEPHEN COHEN's review of Quiet Neighbors: Prosecuting War Criminals in America gives a poor history of the Displaced Persons Commission. It is true that some war criminals came to America as displaced persons. This is regrettable, but

more than a third of a million refugees were given a second start in life through the Displaced Persons Program. Against this number; the number of war criminals is small, indeed. I was a part of the original Displaced Persons Commission, working in Austria and then, later, in Germany. We were under direct White House pressure to "fill the boats." We were also under considerable pressure from Jewish, Catholic, and Lutheran groups to get "their people" aboard. This we did in an orderly and even-handed way. There was no attempt, as far as I know, to discriminate against Jews. Many of those early boats had mostly Jews as passengers.

Mr. Cohen's claim that there was no check on whether or not a displaced person had a Nazi background is flatly wrong. U.S. Army Intelligence (Counter Intelligence Corps) had to certify that candidates for the DP Program were free of Nazi taint. Checks were made against the lists in the Berlin Documents Center and those who failed these investigations were ruled ineligible. Mistakes were made. These are the war criminals of which Mr. Cohen speaks. It is well and good that they are being rounded up and deported, but let us not throw the baby out with the bathwater. American spirit was at its best in its willingness to bring these refugees to our shores. The success of these refugees and their descendents has repaid this country many times over. It was a program with a noble purpose and it was a program that by and large worked.

> Milton Colvin Lexington, Va. (former deputy director, U.S. Displaced Persons Commission, Austria)

STAT